

Last Wednesday at a photo-op supposedly focused on the looming fiscal cliff of higher taxes and indiscriminate federal spending cuts, President Obama gave the impression he was serious about working toward an agreement. "I'll go anywhere and I'll do whatever it takes to get this done." Apparently, he meant to say he would go anywhere and do anything other than negotiate with Congress because he has been noticeably absent from talks with the Republican House for more than two week.

Indeed, as House Speaker John Boehner called on the White House to get serious about working with Congress to get over the impasse that threatens millions of Americans with higher taxes come January 1, 2013, the president responded with dog and pony show trips far from the negotiating table in Washington, DC. Rather than sitting down with Congressional leaders to find common ground, the president encouraged his supporters to call Congress demanding that lawmakers simply pass the president's plan of higher taxes on small business owners.

It is evident that Mr. Obama believes he doesn't have to negotiate with Congress. Business leaders who met with him last week said the president is extremely confident he will prevail and isn't willing to compromise. And, as if to underscore the president's take it or leave it attitude, he dispatched his treasury secretary to Capitol Hill last week to present demands that Congress approve \$1.6 trillion in new taxes over ten years, give him the authority to raise the debt limit without Congress' approval and relay his intentions to seek a multiyear stimulus package starting with \$50 billion in 2013.

On November 6, Mr. Obama was reelected president, not king. No matter how inconvenient it must be for him, he has to deal with a conservative House also elected by the American people. November 6 did not give anyone a mandate, but rather sent a strong message that the country wants Washington to work together to find solutions to our nation's critical budget problems.

As Speaker Boehner put it last week, "The American economy is on the line and this is a moment for adult leadership." The magnitude of the budgetary problems that face our country is so severe it threatens our future. The president's only answer is to penalize America's small business owners – the nation's job creators – with a tax increase just as the economy is limping back to its feet. His strategy is not only injurious to the economy, but it would be an impotent approach to addressing the budget crisis, generating only \$85 billion in new revenue over the first year– enough to fund the government for two weeks.

Let's also be clear that neither this president nor his party can claim the high ground in supporting the 2001 and 2003 cuts for hard working Americans. The 2001 tax cuts cleared the House in May 2001 with the support of only 28 Democrats. And the 2003 tax cuts only garnered the support of seven Democrats in May 2003. Republicans pioneered these tax cuts, which lowered tax rates for all American taxpayers, and we continue to support keeping tax rates low for everyone who is working hard and paying taxes in order to promote a strong, vibrant economic recovery.

Since the president has encouraged Americans to call Congress about taxes, my offices have received a number of calls, including three South Alabama small business owners who say they will certainly have to further reduce their workforce if Mr. Obama is successful in raising their taxes. One business owner indicated she may shutter her business altogether and leave the country.

Tax increases – no matter how great – cannot hold back the giant tidal wave of debt that will swamp America if serious reforms are not made soon. House Republicans were quick to reach out to the president with our proposal to simplify the onerous federal tax code, further reduce spending, and most importantly, sit down with the White House to reform the way our current entitlement programs are structured to keep them solvent for future generations.

Make no mistake, Medicare and Social Security together form one half of all annual federal spending. Their costs are also growing faster than any other portion of the federal budget. These "mandatory" spending programs face bankruptcy due to dramatic increases in health care costs combined with a decrease in the number of workers paying taxes to support them. The long-term costs to Social Security and Medicare are projected to rise over \$60 trillion. No amount of tax increases could offset these colossal costs.

Given the magnitude of the challenges we face as a country, it is profoundly disappointing to see the president shirk his responsibility as the nation's leader and ignore the hard work that must be done. There is still time to reach an agreement, but the window is narrowing quickly.

My staff and I work for you. If we can ever be of service, do not hesitate to call my office toll free at 1-800-288-8721.

For release: December 3, 2012